

domination” under Fusion and gave proof by showing actual statistics of black office holding in both Wilmington and around the state. Throughout the remaining sessions of the legislature, Russell remained relatively quiet and was unable to veto any of the actions of the Democrats as they dismantled most of the Fusionist reforms. Local self-government was eliminated in favor of centralized control of local officials, election laws were rewritten, and a suffrage amendment was on the calendar.⁷¹ Russell did return to Wilmington in 1901 and successfully manipulated several court battles, one of which forced North Carolina’s state government, controlled by Democrats, to pay some of its previously repudiated Reconstruction debts.⁷²

As a senator, Marion Butler was in Washington for the beginning phases of the 1898 campaign, but, by November, he was involved in attempts to organize and hold together the Populist Party at both the local and national levels. Butler had used his newspaper, the *Caucasian*, to deride Democrats to no avail. After the election, his paper claimed that intimidation, bloodshed, and unlimited financial assets were used effectively to prevent the votes of about 30,000 men from being cast.⁷³ Once the Democrats regained control of state government, Butler’s life was still in danger; as articles in papers and letters from associates made clear the Democratic hatred

toward him.⁷⁴ During the summer of 1899, Butler studied law and was admitted to the bar, aware that his political career, as well as the life of the Populist Party’s influence, was coming to an end. Butler lost his senate seat in 1900, and, although he remained true to the principles of the Populist Party, he joined the Republican Party in 1904.⁷⁵

Waddell and his cabinet

In order to justify their political coup and maintain a measure of public support, Waddell and other white leaders knew that they must restore order to the city, entice blacks to return to their homes and workplaces, and push for validation of the election.⁷⁶ Failure to do these things would

⁷⁴ James B. Lloyd wrote Butler that he was afraid someone would try to kill him, particularly after an article was published in the *Charlotte Daily Observer* about Butler. Lloyd urged Butler to get back to Washington as quickly as possible for his own safety. Governor Russell wrote Butler to reassure him that it was not likely that “they will try to assassinate you.” Russell did not think Butler was in jeopardy but told him to “be a little careful.” James B. Lloyd to Marion Butler, November 13, 1898, Governor Russell to Marion Butler, November 12, 1898, Marion Butler Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

⁷⁵ Hunt, *Marion Butler*, 161.

⁷⁶ The returns from the election held on November 8, 1898 had to be validated by officials as a true account of the votes cast. One requirement was that the returns from each precinct had to be signed by the registrars and others appointed to jobs at the precincts. In the Fifth Precinct of the First Ward, where the ballot counting was interrupted, at least two of the officials were African American and had left the precinct before all of the votes were counted. As a result, they did not sign the final tally sheets of the night. Abram Fulton was called to the courthouse on the Monday following the riot, November 14, 1898, to sign the returns and to receive his pay. Assuring the signatures on the returns was one step in proving the validity of the elections in case of a contested election. The *Wilmington Morning Star* of November 10, 1898, reported that the official vote would be recorded in the clerk of Superior Court’s office that day and the official returns were published

⁷¹ The suffrage amendment was proposed in order to limit the ability of African Americans to vote. Further discussion of the disfranchisement amendment will be found in Chapter 7. *Public Documents of the State of North Carolina*, 1899, 3-26; Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 140-1.

⁷² Russell died at his plantation in 1908 and received lukewarm eulogies in state newspapers. Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 160-185, 187-8.

⁷³ James L. Hunt, *Marion Butler and American Populism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 154.